

MAP 11

## Longstreet's Approach

*noon - 4:00 p.m.*

James Longstreet was Lee's "Old War Horse." With Jackson's death, he had become Lee's most valued subordinate and his only experienced corps commander. Now it was Longstreet to whom Lee entrusted responsibility for the attack on the Federal left. Two of Longstreet's three divisions, those of John Bell Hood and Lafayette McLaws, had gone into bivouac along Marsh Creek the night before and were within easy marching distance (1). His third division—Pickett's—was still on the Chambersburg Pike and expected to arrive later that day.

Lee sent a scout from his own staff, Captain S. R. Johnston, to survey the ground and select a route for Longstreet's attack. Between 7:00 and 8:00 that morning, Johnston led a party of 200 men down Willoughby Run, across the Emmitsburg Road and up onto Little Round Top (2). Amazingly, he encountered not one enemy soldier. Johnston spurred his horse up to the crest of Little Round Top from which he could view nearly the entire Federal position away to the north. He returned to Confederate lines to report that the high ground was unoccupied. Only moments later, Sickles' men came marching up the Emmitsburg Road. The Confederates noted their arrival, but noted, too, that they went into position on Cemetery Ridge (3). The Federal left was still open to a flank attack.

Delighted with the news Johnston brought him, Lee turned to Longstreet and asked him to prepare the attack. Longstreet, however, was still unreconciled to an offensive, and he again raised several objections. Lee listened patiently, but he refused to modify his orders. Trusting in Longstreet's professionalism, Lee left him in charge of the arrangements while he rode off to Ewell's headquarters.

Lee returned two hours later at 11:00 and found all the soldiers still in their camps. Longstreet excused his lack of progress by explaining that he was waiting for the arrival of Pickett's Division. But it was already near noon, and Lee knew he could wait no longer. If Pickett was approaching, so too, were large numbers of Federal reinforcements. This time

Lee gave Longstreet his orders in no uncertain terms: His artillery was to occupy the high ground around the Peach Orchard, and under the cover of its fire, the infantry would attack up the Emmitsburg Road rolling up the Federal left as it advanced.

Longstreet's men finally began to move at noon, seven hours after Lee first ordered the attack. But even now there were unforeseen delays. McLaws' Division initially marched southward along the banks of Marsh Creek crossing the Fairfield Road near the Black Horse Tavern (4). But a few hundred yards beyond it, the farm road ascended a shoulder of Herr Ridge from which the column could be seen from Little Round Top where a Federal signal team was operating. Longstreet might have sent his troops around the shoulder of the ridge and kept them out of sight as E. P. Alexander's artillery did (5), but instead he chose to backtrack and take an alternate route. The troops countermarched, passed their own campsite, and headed north, crossing Herr Ridge behind the screen of the trees on Seminary Ridge. From there, the men followed Willoughby Run back to the original farm road. Instead of a half mile on a dirt road, they marched nearly four miles, much of it cross country.

While Longstreet's men followed this circuitous route, the men of Sickles' Corps were advancing to the Emmitsburg Road. Thus, it was that when the men of McLaws' Division passed the Pitzer School and began to deploy just west of the Emmitsburg Road near the Peach Orchard (6), they found not an open flank, but a Federal corps arrayed in front of them. McLaws sent word back to Longstreet that a large body of Federal troops was in his front, but Longstreet dismissed the report, and told McLaws to go ahead with the attack. Hood, too, was disturbed by what he saw. In addition to substantial Federal forces, the terrain to his front was very rough—the huge boulders of Devil's Den and the rocky terrain around Plum Run were sure to impede his attack and aid the defenders. Moreover, Hood's scouts brought word that the Federal line did not extend beyond the Round Tops. Hood sent a message to Longstreet asking permission to swing around the end of the Federal line and attack the enemy in flank and rear. Longstreet would not hear of it. "General Lee's orders are to attack up the Emmitsburg Road." Hood was so disturbed by Longstreet's reply that he went in person to see him. Again Longstreet turned him down. "We must obey General Lee's orders," he said stubbornly. Resigned, Hood returned to his troops. At 4:00, McLaws' artillery opened fire, and the attack began.

